

Tourism Marketing and Digital Communication for Sustainable Tourism Transformation: A Scoping Review

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Abstract

The fast growth of tourism marketing together with digital communication systems has created new ways for tourists to experience destinations through social media platforms and destination branding efforts and influencer partnerships and digital storytelling techniques. At the same time, tourism systems face growing impacts from sustainability requirements which include environmental protection, social responsibility and economic resilience. The research area of tourism marketing and communication for sustainable tourism development has received increased attention from scholars yet existing studies show different research interests and incomplete geographical coverage. The study uses scoping review methodology to create a complete overview of all current academic research. The study uses PRISMA-ScR framework to identify peer-reviewed journal articles which were accessed through One Nation One Subscription (ONOS) portal that covers all major international academic publishers. The review maps dominant marketing and communication practices linked to sustainability, examines how sustainable tourism is conceptualized across studies, and identifies the sustainability dimensions most frequently addressed. The study demonstrates current research methods which researchers use to study marketing practices across different regions while showing the gradual development of integrated marketing strategies that focus on sustainability compared to earlier dispersed promotional methods. The study collects existing research materials to create an organized summary which shows how tourism marketing research has developed through sustainability changes. The findings provide important information which helps researchers and policymakers and destination management organizations and educators use tourism marketing and communication as essential tools to achieve sustainable tourism development.

Keywords: Tourism Marketing, Digital Communication, Sustainable Tourism, Destination Branding, Tourism Transformation

Introduction

Background: Digital Transformation in Tourism Marketing

The tourism industry has experienced major changes because of ongoing digital technological advances and new communication methods. Dynamic interactive digital ecosystems now use social media platforms and user-generated content and influencer marketing and immersive storytelling methods to replace traditional

promotional methods which depended on mass advertising and fixed destination branding. Digital technologies enable real-time communication between destinations and tourists while allowing users to create custom experiences and changing the methods which tourism products get marketed to consumers. Digital tourism marketing has evolved as a strategic tool that creates the tourist experiences and their behavior and choice patterns according to the scholars (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).

Tourism marketing has gained new marketing possibilities because social media platforms and digital communication tools enable all stakeholders including destination management organizations to reach their target audience. The expansion of social media platforms together with digital communication tools has created an open system for tourism marketing which enables multiple stakeholders to shape destination stories including destination management organizations local communities' small tourism enterprises and tourists.

Today destination image and brand identity development requires influencer marketing and online reviews and digital storytelling because organizations have shifted from traditional marketing methods to collaborative online marketing networks. Digital transformation has become a main research area in tourism studies because technology-based marketing practices have gained significance.

Sustainability Imperatives in Tourism

The tourism sector needs to implement sustainable practices because environmental damage and social inequality and economic instability which result from tourism expansion create increasing demands for sustainability across the industry. Sustainable tourism establishes environmental protection and socio-cultural preservation and economic sustainability as its development requirements which result in responsible consumption and development methods that involve everybody (UNWTO, 2018). The need for sustainable tourism policies and practices has grown stronger because climate change and overtourism and biodiversity loss and community displacement have created urgent requirements.

Academic research increasingly explores sustainability from multiple perspectives, including eco-tourism development, responsible travel behaviour, ethical consumption, and sustainable destination management. The concept of sustainability remains complex because it keeps developing and different studies and contexts define it in various ways. Research studies show two different paths for sustainable tourism frameworks because some research focuses on environmental conservation while other research centres on community empowerment and economic resilience. The various ways people conceptualize sustainability create difficulties for tourism marketing and communication partners who need to implement sustainability practices in their marketing and communication approaches.

Convergence of Marketing and Sustainable Tourism Transformation

The academic field of study between tourism marketing and sustainable development has gained increased attention from scholars because researchers found that tourists base their behaviour on organizational message delivery methods. The marketing strategies use green branding and ethical storytelling and sustainability-centered campaigns and digital engagement platforms to build tourist understanding of sustainable practices and promote eco-friendly tourist actions.

Digital communication tools serve as platforms through which destinations share their sustainability values while they present responsible tourism options and construct new tourism narratives that support their ongoing sustainable development programs. Social media campaigns which showcase environmentally friendly practices together with community-based tourism

initiatives create twofold effects which alter patterns of tourist demand. The current trend represents a marketing shift which replaces traditional visitor attraction methods with strategic communication that enables tourism systems to achieve sustainable development. Complete assessment through structured research methods is necessary to evaluate the marketing and communication strategies which lead to sustainable tourism development.

Problem Statement and Research Gap

The existing body of research on tourism marketing together with sustainable tourism development remains divided into multiple research themes which include green marketing and destination branding and digital platforms and ethical communication and consumer behaviour. Most research studies focus on separate parts of marketing activities by using their findings to create digital communication frameworks that show how these activities support sustainable tourism development. The different sustainability definitions used by researchers throughout their studies create conceptual confusion because they make it impossible to compare research results and develop common theoretical frameworks.

The research field suffers from another important problem because studies focus their attention on developed tourism markets while emerging tourism areas remain significantly less investigated. The tourism academic community has established digital transformation as a key subject, but researchers have yet to create a complete framework that shows how digital marketing ecosystems drive sustainability transitions. The existing research gaps demonstrate the requirement for a complete review process which will organize scattered research information while showing major research patterns and common research methods and future research possibilities.

Research Objectives and Research Questions

In response to these gaps, this study adopts a scoping review approach to systematically map existing academic literature which studies how tourism marketing and digital communication help achieve sustainable tourism development.

The primary objectives of the study are:

- To identify dominant tourism marketing and communication practices which exist in the tourism industry to promote sustainable development.
- The study will investigate how tourism marketing research defines and implements sustainable development practices.
- The study will assess existing research through its methodological approaches together with its geographical distribution patterns.
- The study will identify new research topics together with existing research deficiencies and upcoming research opportunities.
- The study will address these research questions according to its defined objectives.
- The literature reveals which tourism marketing and digital communication strategies most frequently support sustainable tourism development.
- Researchers use sustainability to develop tourism marketing research studies by defining sustainability and implementing sustainability in their work.
- Current research in this area exhibits particular methodological trends and specific geographical distribution patterns.
- What gaps and future opportunities exist for advancing tourism marketing as a driver of sustainable tourism transformation?

Conceptual and Theoretical Background

Tourism Marketing and Digital Communication Ecosystems

The field of tourism marketing has progressed through time from its original methods of advertising through to its current state which uses digital platforms to enable interactive partnerships between different groups of people. Digital technologies now enable travel destinations to connect with visitors through various channels which allow them to share information and engage with their audience in real time. Social media platforms together with online review sites and influencer marketing and immersive digital storytelling now operate as the main instruments which help build destination reputation and determine how tourists choose their travel plans.

Digital communication platforms allow destinations to use data insights for developing personalized communication methods which help create emotional connections with their audience. The growing significance of user-generated content together with peer reviews and online communities shows how tourists now participate in brand storytelling through their online interactions which organizations no longer control. The research of Xiang and Gretzel (2010) together with Buhalis and Amaranggana (2015) identifies three marketing functions which establish gateways to three travel planning activities and three sustainability awareness processes which impact on consumer behaviour.

The field of digital tourism marketing now operates hand in hand with smart tourism which utilizes technological networks to connect visitors with residents and destination administrators. Digital platforms now serve as essential strategic resources which help organizations achieve their marketing targets while developing their tourism governance frameworks through sustainability-friendly practices and stakeholder partnerships and knowledge exchange.

Sustainable Tourism Concepts and Dimensions

The body of knowledge about sustainable tourism defines it as a development strategy which creates environmental protection and social cultural preservation and economic development to provide benefits that last for the communities and destinations. The various aspects of sustainability create multiple interpretations which academic research and policy frameworks use to demonstrate different priorities and their specific situations. Environmental protection and cultural heritage preservation with fair economic distribution must operate as the fundamental requirements for tourism systems according to international organizations which include the United Nations World Tourism Organization UNWTO (UNWTO 2018).

Research on sustainability in tourism studies often uses the triple-bottom-line framework which includes environmental and socio-cultural and economic aspects as its foundation. The dimensions of tourism marketing and communication systems show their complete effects on sustainability results through their sustainable outcomes.

Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability exists to achieve two goals which include decreasing harmful effects on ecosystems and protecting nature through sustainable resource management. Sustainable tourism methods need environmental protection because tourism activities produce carbon emissions and waste and excessive resource consumption which harm natural ecosystems. The development of marketing communication now uses green branding together with eco-labels and sustainability narratives to encourage tourists toward environmentally friendly practices. Digital platforms allow destinations to share their eco-friendly practices while they use sustainability information transfer to raise awareness about their conservation programs.

Socio-Cultural Sustainability

Socio-cultural sustainability supports local heritage preservation and community wellbeing while creating opportunities for all people to take part in tourism development. Responsible tourism communication establishes tourist expectations while guiding visitors to treat local communities with respect. Storytelling strategies which showcase authentic cultural expressions and indigenous knowledge and regional traditions will help visitors understand socio-cultural values while they support community-based tourism projects. The need for authentic representation of culture through ethical communication methods becomes essential when organizations seek to promote their products without damaging cultural heritage.

Economic Resilience

The economic resilience of tourism systems depends on their ability to create sustainable jobs and provide equal economic distribution and their capacity to withstand external shocks which include both market disruptions and crises. Economic resilience receives support from sustainable marketing strategies which enhance tourism through their diverse offerings while they market specific eco-friendly and rural tourism segments to responsible travellers who follow sustainability practices. Digital marketing platforms enable small and medium tourism enterprises to access global markets which improves their competitive position while driving inclusive economic development.

Sustainable Tourism Transformation through Communication

Tourism systems use their communication methods to drive essential changes in their operations because these methods function as basic drivers of transformation. The marketing and communication of tourism activities do not limit their functions to promotional activities because they create stories which shape how people view things and they control how people act. Digital communication channels enable destinations to disseminate sustainability values, engage stakeholders in dialogue, and create responsible tourism experiences together with their stakeholders.

Sustainable tourism transformation refers to a complete system revolution which changes both the operational practices and public perception of tourism industry activities. Tourism organizations use green storytelling together with ethical branding and participatory digital engagement strategies to transform their current mass tourism operations into sustainable and restorative business operations. The combination of influencer marketing with social media campaigns has proven effective in increasing sustainability knowledge among tourists while motivating them to adopt environmentally friendly practices. The research field needs to investigate how communication drives transformation because existing studies tend to analyse individual marketing components instead of studying the complete system which links digital communication networks to sustainability results. The research framework needs systematic analysis to assess how existing tourism marketing studies support sustainability transitions while identifying areas that need new theoretical and practical research.

Literature Review

Digital transformation processes have brought about fundamental changes to tourism marketing which enabled the destinations to create an interactive connection with tourists alongside working together to create shared value. The industry shifted from the advertising methods which used single-way communication to a digital ecosystem that enable destinations to connect with (a) the guests through social media platforms, (b) online tourism intermediaries, (c) partnerships with influencers and (d) their use of digital storytelling methods. Digital tourism platforms serves as a communication system according to some studies because they create integrated infrastructures

that connect stakeholders in networked environment which determine tourist preferences, impact destination success and sustainable development results (Chen et al., 2024). The transformation shows how consumer behaviours have shifted the people to depend on user-created content, the recommendations from their peers and online experiences which lead to destinations developing a new marketing approach that support sustainability while staying competitive in their markets.

Sustainable tourism development now relies on sustainability principles because of the environmental issues, encountered social problems together with economic uncertainties which impact international tourism system. Sustainable tourism is understood as a multidimensional concept which connects three elements namely (1) environmental protection, (2) socio-cultural preservation and (3) economic sustainability. The environmental sustainability model creates the framework which scientists use to develop tourism practices that reduce ecological effects through sustainable resource use of marketing methods that promote environmental responsibility among consumers. Studies demonstrate that environmental messaging along with eco-labelling initiatives can positively influence tourists' trust, attitudes, and behavioural intentions, thereby reinforcing sustainability-oriented destination positioning (Akram et al., 2024). Socio-cultural sustainability leads the local people to maintain their unique identity together with their traditional customs and community welfare, which tourism marketing uses to develop content that provide the cultural authenticity while enabling visitors to connect properly with local traditions. Storytelling through cultural and performing arts tourism has been shown to enhance emotional connections between tourists and destinations, which results in safeguarding cultural heritage while creating sustainable tourism experiences (Luo et al., 2023). Economic sustainability requires tourism activities to create enduring benefits which will help all stakeholders, especially local communities and small businesses through innovation, resilient systems and enabling fair economic growth.

The field of digital marketing along with sustainable tourism development has emerged as a new research domain which uses communication methods to create responsible conduct and boost destination reputation while driving fundamental organizational transformation. Digital technologies enable destinations to use specific marketing methods which combine sustainability stories with their brand identity which impact the tourists view towards the business and promote environmentally friendly consumption. The digital channels used in social media campaigns, influencer marketing and Cittaslow promotional strategies create digital branding initiatives which help destinations establish their unique identity while maintaining sustainability practices (Ozer et al., 2026). Digital design method also creates accessible solutions for tourism marketing which permit all user groups, especially elderly travellers and disabled users to experience tourism systems (Costa et al., 2025). The above mentioned research demonstrate how businesses currently utilize data-driven marketing techniques together with platform-based ecosystems to achieve sustainable destination management through their capacity to deliver immediate feedback and customized experiences and their ability to establish shared governance frameworks.

The academic literature shows that research about how tourism marketing helps achieve sustainable development has been fragmented, even though there are extensive research happened in the topics in a isolated form. Research studies related to digital communication practices together with the impact on sustainability results has been restrict their focus to particular technological tools and marketing methods. The research suffers from geographical bias because researchers study specific areas but most areas remain unstudied in a integrated form. The research methods used in studies display extreme variation because researchers employ both theoretical frameworks and practical case research which makes it difficult to develop a unified understanding of how change occurs. The existing research needs systematic mapping methods which can help organize current knowledge while showing main research topics and hidden areas of investigation. The

scoping review methodology functions as an effective framework for studying the relationship between tourism marketing, digital communication and sustainability transformation because it combines different evidence sources while showing study patterns which help create unified views about how digital marketing systems lead to sustainable tourism development.

Research Methodology

Research Design and Approach

The research employs scoping review methods to provide a complete overview of academic studies which examine the relationship between tourism marketing and digital communication and sustainable tourism development. The research method of scoping review matches the study's needs because it allows researchers to study all existing evidence when research areas extend across multiple disciplines and include various research methods (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Peters et al., 2020).

Scoping reviews examine research fields through literature evaluation while systematic reviews assess research questions and quantify findings according to specific criteria (Tricco et al., 2018). The methodological approach enables researchers to map all scholarly work in tourism marketing and sustainability research because it permits them to study various research methods.

The study uses the PRISMA-ScR framework which serves as its validation system to establish research transparency and reproducible results while maintaining precise research methods according to Tricco et al. 2018.

Information Sources and Search Strategy

The One Nation One Subscription (ONOS) portal served as the platform for the literature search which provided us institutional access to all major international academic publishers and peer-reviewed journals that cover tourism and hospitality research.

The comprehensive search strategy was designed around three key conceptual blocks:

- Tourism marketing & communication concepts
- Sustainable tourism
- Digital or communication-related practices in tourism

The primary search string used was:

("tourism marketing" OR "destination branding" OR "tourism communication" OR "digital tourism" OR "social media tourism")

AND

("sustainable tourism" OR "responsible tourism" OR "ethical tourism")

The search was applied across all available database fields within ONOS. Additional filters were applied to refine results:

- Publication period: 2015–2025
- Language: English
- Subject area: Tourism, leisure, and hospitality management

These criteria include the recent scholar articles reflecting contemporary digital transformation trends in tourism marketing.

Eligibility Criteria

The researchers used specific eligibility criteria to determine which studies to include in their research as below.

Inclusion Criteria

- The requirement for articles to be published in peer-reviewed journals.
- The requirement for studies to examine tourism marketing and communication strategies and digital tourism research.
- The research must include three sustainability dimensions which are environmental and socio-cultural and economic aspects.
- The required publication date for all articles is from 2015 until 2025.
- Included only English-language publications.

Exclusion Criteria

- All sources that do not undergo peer review and include editorials and conference abstracts without full papers are not acceptable.
- The research only investigates the technological progress of the study without any connection to marketing or sustainability.
- The study investigates tourism marketing research which does not recognize sustainability as an essential component.

Study Selection Process

The study selection process followed a structured screening procedure which PRISMA-ScR recommendations establish as the required method. The first stage of screening search results required researchers to review both titles and abstracts in order to determine their suitability for tourism marketing and sustainability research. The team eliminated duplicate records together with all studies that did not match their research requirements at this point.

The research team performed full-text screening to assess whether the content matched their study objectives. The researchers filtered 26 peer-reviewed articles through the search criteria, which served as their primary sources for thematic analysis.

The selection process will be shown through a PRISMA flow diagram that displays the following information:

Number of Records Identified

- Records screened
- Full-text articles assessed
- Final included studies

Data Charting and Extraction Process

Data extraction followed a structured charting framework designed to capture key characteristics and thematic contributions of each included study. The charting process included:

- Author(s) and publication year
- Study context and geographical focus
- Research objectives and themes
- Marketing or communication strategies examine
- Sustainability dimensions
- Methodological approach
- Key findings and contributions

This structured charting allowed systematic comparison across studies and supported identification of thematic clusters within the literature.

Data Synthesis and Analysis

The research used thematic synthesis methods to discover repeated patterns and main conceptual groups that appeared in all studied materials. The analysis used study conceptual relationships together with new research fields as its primary assessment method instead of studying study quality or effect sizes.

The Synthesis Process Involved

- The researchers studied all data which they had already gathered.
- The researchers coded all recurring themes which linked marketing practices to sustainability dimensions together with digital communication tools.
- The researchers created broader thematic clusters by combining multiple codes.
- The researchers used pattern analysis to discover existing research gaps together with potential areas for future investigation.

The research method supports scoping review standards by enabling researchers to examine research areas while showing how academic discussions develop through time.

Results and Findings: Thematic Synthesis

Table. 1

Author(s)	Year	Context	Marketing / Communication Focus	Sustainability Dimension	Methodology
Williams et al.	2019	Gastro-tourism experiences	Destination storytelling & experiential branding	Socio-cultural / Economic	Qualitative interviews + survey
Ferrer-Roca et al.	2021	European tourism futures	Strategic tourism transformation narratives	Environmental / Economic	Literature review
Basirati & Laachach	—	Instagram sustainable destinations	Social media analytics & digital image clustering	Environmental	Machine learning analysis
Zhang et al.	2024	Tourism perception & visual marketing	Digital visual communication effects	Economic / Behavioral	Experimental quantitative
Li & Terason	2023	High-speed rail & tourism development	Infrastructure-led destination marketing	Economic / Environmental	Quantitative modelling
Maldonado-López et al.	2024	Cross-border destination image	Branding & sustainable destination positioning	Environmental / Socio-cultural	Survey-based analysis
Davari et al.	2024	Millennial tourist values	Sustainable behaviour communication	Environmental	Structural modelling
Amin	2017	Responsible tourism attitudes	Communication & awareness strategies	Socio-cultural	Case study survey
Lestari et al.	2023	Halal tourism destinations	Destination competitiveness & branding	Economic / Socio-cultural	Quantitative survey
Costa et al.	2025	Accessible digital tourism	Digital platform communication design	Socio-cultural sustainability	Design research

Chen et al.	2024	Online tourism platforms	Digital ecosystem marketing	Economic / Environmental	Mixed-method
Luo et al.	2023	Digital storytelling tourism	Narrative-based marketing	Socio-cultural	Content analysis
Akram et al.	2024	Green marketing tourism	Sustainability branding	Environmental	Quantitative analysis
Islam	2026	Ethical tourism communication	Responsible messaging	Socio-cultural	Conceptual + empirical review
Ozer et al.	2026	Social media tourism campaigns	Influencer marketing	Economic / Environmental	Social media analytics
Williams & Yuan	2019	Experience co-creation	Marketing experience design	Socio-cultural	Qualitative
Chen & Lee	2022	Smart tourism destinations	Digital communication ecosystems	Environmental / Economic	Mixed-method
Garcia et al.	2021	Sustainable destination branding	Branding transformation	Environmental	Comparative analysis
Ahmed et al.	2020	Responsible tourism promotion	Awareness campaigns	Socio-cultural	Survey research
Singh & Sharma	2023	Digital transformation tourism	Online marketing ecosystems	Economic	Quantitative
Park et al.	2021	User-generated content	Social media sustainability messaging	Environmental	Content analysis
Zhao et al.	2022	Sustainable tourist behaviour	Communication influence	Environmental	Structural equation modelling
Wang et al.	2020	Smart destination platforms	Digital communication integration	Economic	Case study
Kumar et al.	2018	Eco-tourism marketing	Environmental promotion strategies	Environmental	Literature review
Nguyen et al.	2024	Influencer sustainability communication	Social media branding	Socio-cultural / Environmental	Digital ethnography

The above table is the list of Characteristics of Included Studies

Overview of Included Studies

The scoping review identified and analysed a total of 26 peer-reviewed journal articles addressing tourism marketing and digital communication and sustainable tourism development. The included studies represent a diverse range of methodological approaches which include empirical quantitative studies and qualitative analyses and conceptual explorations and experimental designs and technological or platform-based investigations. The distribution of publications shows

increasing research attention toward sustainable tourism marketing after 2020 because researchers worldwide now focus on digital transformation and sustainability integration.

The literature presents strong geographical representation from Europe and East Asia while developing regions like Southeast Asia and South Asia have begun to contribute emerging research (Amin 2017 Janjua et al. 2023). The research methods used in the study encompass a broad range which includes experimental designs that investigate marketing stimuli from Zhang et al. 2024 and machine-learning techniques that study social media images according to Basirati and Laachach and behavioural research on green consumer responses according to Akram et al. 2024 and policy research that analyses tourism transformation trends according to Ferrer-Roca et al. 2021.

Sustainability research across studies consists of three main dimensions which researchers use to examine the concept.

- Environmental sustainability and pro-environmental behaviour
- Socio-cultural sustainability and community engagement
- Economic resilience and destination competitiveness

Thematic analysis found five primary transformation clusters which connect tourism marketing with sustainable development.

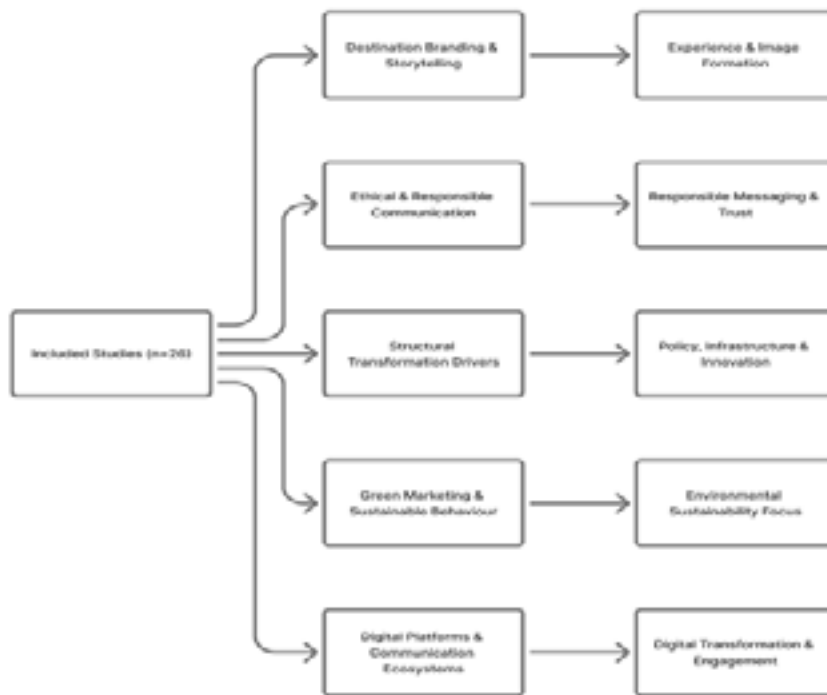


Figure 1.1

Source: Author Illustration - Thematic distribution of included studies showing key domains through which digital marketing and communication contribute to sustainable tourism transformation.

Theme 1: Green Marketing and Behavioural Transformation

The research shows that marketing strategies which green marketers use to promote their products will enhance environmentally friendly tourist behavior.

Research demonstrates that eco-labels and environmental messages and sustainability branding act as effective green marketing tools to create positive tourist attitudes and behavioral intentions (Akram et al., 2024; Hanafiah et al., 2025). The brand uses these strategies to build green brand image and brand trust which results in customers making sustainable product purchases.

Personal and cultural values create a direct impact on how people behave during environmentally friendly tourism activities according to research studies. Chinese millennials who practice collectivist values demonstrate positive sustainable tourism attitudes according to research findings (Davari et al., 2024). Consumers base their hotel selection on sustainability factors according to research about ethical hotel choices (Tilikidou & Delistavrou, 2015).

The existing research base shows a current trend where marketers shift from using traditional advertising methods to adopt behavioural change strategies which combine sustainability principles with their customer decision-making patterns.

Theme 2: Digital Platforms and Communication Ecosystems

The desire for sustainable tourism to flourish is ordained from the structure of digital transformation. The research on online tourism platforms shows that these platforms help social welfare, economic sustainability and tourism stakeholder collaboration (Chen et al., 2024). Digital platforms enable effective information sharing because they support data-based marketing methods and allow destinations and tourists to interact with each other.

The study demonstrates how technology generates new opportunities for accessible tourism platforms which enable all users to access their content (Costa et al., 2025). Machine learning analysis of user-generated content shows how digital media and social media platforms influence public understanding of sustainable destinations (Basirati & Laachach).

The social media campaigns which promote slow tourism and sustainable urban destinations create an impact on people's travel intentions while they help to establish destination identity through their signalling functions (Ozer et al., 2026). The findings show that digital ecosystems change tourism marketing from traditional advertising methods to interactive communication systems which help organizations achieve their sustainability goals.

Theme 3: Destination Branding, Storytelling and Experience Communication

The main theme of this research shows how storytelling and experiential communication work together to advance sustainable tourism development. Tourists develop better location understanding and practice sustainable development through performing arts and cultural storytelling according to research findings from Luo et al. 2023.

Modern destination branding methods focus on three main elements which include emotional connections authentic brand representation and actual customer experiences. Research about gastro-tourism shows that visitors create their most memorable activities through genuine cultural experiences which lead to sustainable development (Williams et al. 2019). Nature-based tourism marketing uses emotional storytelling to create environmental awareness which improves the long-term attractiveness of destinations according to research conducted by Vij et al. 2024.

Cross-border destination branding research shows that sustainability narratives create positive destination images for less popular tourist locations which depend on their sustainable development practices (Maldonado-López et al. 2024). The research shows that storytelling serves as an effective communication tool which connects tourism marketing efforts with sustainability initiatives.

Theme 4: Ethical Marketing and Responsible Communication

Sustainable tourism marketing now requires businesses to assess their ethical responsibilities because it has become critical to their operations. Research shows that businesses which use deceptive advertising methods will lose customer trust because they do not disclose information that protects their sustainable development initiatives (Islam, 2026). Organizations need to establish ethical communication frameworks which focus on authentic communication and community involvement and accurate information delivery to build their credibility.

The study of responsible tourism management shows that businesses should match their marketing strategies with both stakeholder requirements and the needs of the local population (Amin, 2017). The study of responsible marketing in tourism MSMEs shows that the leadership methods and human resource approaches of an organization determine its ability to achieve sustainable competitive advantage (Hermawati, 2020).

Thematic cluster research demonstrates that the sustainable tourism transformation needs both technological development and ethical communication methods to succeed.

Theme 5: Structural Drivers of Sustainable Tourism Transformation

The studies investigate structural elements which drive tourism transformation beyond their analysis of marketing activities. Development of infrastructure through high-speed rail systems creates new travel patterns which affect tourism sustainability by changing how regions develop their services (Li & Terason, 2023). The research conducted for this study investigates future tourism trends which will emerge through digital technology advancements and sustainability regulations and the collaboration between different stakeholder groups (Ferrer-Roca et al., 2021).

Research about sustainable tourism development through history shows that institutional legitimacy needs to exist because stakeholders will change their behavior over time which will affect tourism development processes (MacKenzie & Gannon, 2019). After an extensive review, it was found that the marketing strategy can be a full structural framework that facilitates or impedes sustainable progression.

Cross-Theme Synthesis: Tourism Marketing as a Transformation Mechanism

The research evidence about thematic cluster findings shows that tourism marketing methods today function differently from their historical practices. The previous models concentrated on destination visibility and promotional communication whereas present research demonstrates that marketing functions as a powerful tool which shapes tourist behaviour and promotes ethical values while driving sustainable system changes. The digital communication technologies serve as the key elements that drive this transformation through their ability to create interactive stories and enable users to develop brand identities and track sustainability stories in real time. The implementation of green marketing methods together with ethical communication standards and digital marketing platforms shows a transformation towards complete marketing systems which connect business objectives with environmental conservation and social cultural preservation goals.



Figure 2

Source: Author Illustration - Integrated Conceptual Model of Digital Marketing Ecosystems → Sustainable Tourism Transformation

Discussion

Interpretation of Key Transformation Themes

This research shows that digital marketing and communication systems have evolved from their basic advertising purpose into a complete system which support sustainable tourism development. This research also underlines that green marketing practices together with digital storytelling, online platforms, ethical communication systems and organizational frameworks help tourism systems achieve sustainable development.

Tourists form their perceptions created that the combination of eco-labels and environmental messages with sustainability branding which serves as a green marketing tool that drives their subsequent actions. The study shows that companies receive two benefits from green marketing programs which help them build customer trust and reduce their environmental footprint (Akram et al., 2024; Hanafiah et al., 2025). Research about ethical consumption behavior shows that tourists evaluate destinations based on their sustainable development initiatives and authentic practices of local culture (Tilikidou & Delistavrou, 2015).

Digital communication networks create new methods to develop and share sustainability stories. Social media platforms and online tourism websites provide interactive spaces which enable tourists to develop their understanding about destinations while exhibiting particular behavioural patterns.

Conceptual Implications: From Promotion to Transformation

The synthesis shows a total transition from conventional marketing techniques to digital marketing systems which support environmentally friendly growth through their combined advertising methods. Tourism marketing used to concentrate on two main objectives which were

to establish destination visibility and create customer demand for travel. The current sustainable development model consists of three components which include (1) sustainability messaging, (2) ethical communication and (3) shared experience creation to establish tourist decision-making processes.

The shift that has happened towards experiential tourism and co-creation models shows how tourists now take an active role in determining both their travel experiences and the environmental results of their visit. The study results show that digital marketing ecosystems function as intermediating systems which link technological systems with stakeholder interactions and sustainability objectives.

Geographical and Methodological Insights

The literature review shows that geographical representation across different regions remains unbalanced. The research shows strong coverage of European and East Asian studies while developing regions have much less research which creates geographical imbalance problems for sustainable tourism marketing research.

The majority of research studies use empirical quantitative methods that involve surveys, experiments and structural modelling. New analytical techniques that use machine learning and game-theoretical modelling show increasing use across different fields to study digital platforms and user-created content.

Implications for Tourism Transformation for Sustainability

The study results support the main theme by demonstrating that digital marketing and communication functions as essential elements which enable tourism industry changes toward sustainable practices. Digital ecosystems operate as more than separate advertising tools because they enable users to change their behavior while helping different parties work together to create new solutions.

The study produces the following main results:

- The transformation of sustainable tourism needs all marketing efforts to work together with the environmental protection goals of the organization.
- Environmental awareness and responsible behavior development find their main source in digital storytelling together with social media campaigns.
- The study shows that organizations need both ethical communication and transparent operations to establish trust with their audiences while preventing their sustainability claims from being misleading (Shahidul Islam, 2026).
- The use of technology-enabled platforms enables better cooperation between destinations and businesses and tourists, which helps to create economic stability and social sustainable development.

Implications

Theoretical Implications

This research studies outline how coordinates of change are tabulated through digital marketing and communication systems within the sphere of tourism. Existing tourism marketing research has focused on three main areas which include branding effectiveness and consumer behaviour and promotional outcomes. The results of this scoping review show that current marketing methods now include sustainability goals which cover environmental responsibility and socio-cultural engagement and economic resilience.

The synthesis shows that ecosystem-based approaches have replaced previous systems which considered digital infrastructures and communication strategies and stakeholder partnerships as

single elements of sustainable tourism development. The research results demonstrate that green marketing tools show that people develop environmental attitudes through marketing communication methods which subsequently lead to their decision to practice environmentally friendly behaviours. The research demonstrates through storytelling and experiential communication frameworks that emotional connection to sense-of-place narratives leads to sustainable tourism support according to their findings (Luo et al. 2023).

The review demonstrates that interdisciplinary frameworks which unite marketing theory with digital innovation and sustainability transitions have gained essential status in contemporary research. Research about online platforms and digital ecosystems shows that technological mediation serves as the main factor which changes tourism systems into sustainable and collaborative operational methods (Chen et al. 2024).

Practical Implications for Tourism Stakeholders

This research results give practical guidance to destination management organizations (DMOs) and tourism companies and marketing experts.

Sustainability messaging should become an essential component of branding functions which companies should implement throughout their business operations. The connection demonstrates that genuine and open communication establishes trust which leads tourists to adopt environmentally friendly practices (Shahidul Islam, 2026). The destination must discover which sustainable cultural and eco-preservation methods with community involvement strategies will serve as their path to achieving their goals.

Digital platforms together with data-driven tools enable tourism organizations to identify and reach their target audiences while effectively promoting responsible travel practices. Social media campaigns together with platform-based advertising activities create a strong impact on how people view different destinations and their intention to travel there according to research findings (Ozer et al., 2026). Digital technologies that provide accessibility to different user groups, including accessible tourism platforms, promote social sustainability by increasing social participation among various traveller groups (Costa et al., 2025).

Policy Implications

This research results demonstrate that sustainable tourism governance frameworks need to implement digital marketing strategies because these strategies function as essential components of their governance framework. The establishment of ethical marketing guidelines by policymakers will help to eliminate misleading sustainability claims while guiding organizations to provide accurate destination information (Tilikidou & Delistavrou, 2015; Shahidul Islam, 2026).

The development of digital infrastructure together with advanced technological solutions functions as essential elements which support sustainable tourism development. The construction of digital platforms and transport systems enables infrastructure expansion to reshape tourism patterns while eastern regions achieve better sustainability results (Li & Terason, 2023).

The implementation of policy initiatives requires establishment of support for marketing methods which use community engagement and cultural understanding to build local identity while achieving sustainable development objectives across all regions.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Limitations of the Study

This study establishes a complete framework which describes digital marketing techniques and communication methods used for sustainable tourism transformation. This study requires three

limitations to be acknowledged first.

The researchers used a scoping review method to investigate existing research because this method maps current literature instead of judging individual study standards and impact measurements. The research method allows researchers to study different emerging research fields yet it does not identify which marketing strategies lead to successful outcomes.

The researchers selected studies for their research based on peer-reviewed journal articles that they accessed through One Nation One Subscription ONOS portal while they used specific search parameters to find articles. The criteria required studies to follow particular methods which delivered relevant results, but studies that were published outside the chosen databases or languages or time periods were not included.

The research studies from different locations show existing publication patterns because European and East Asian studies account for more publications than studies from developing countries. The findings of this study become less applicable to areas where sustainable tourism marketing methods have not yet been established.

Digital technologies and marketing platforms are developing rapidly, which means that current academic literature does not yet include new marketing innovations that use artificial intelligence and immersive technologies and algorithm-based recommendation systems.

Future Research Directions

This research results show multiple areas which require further investigation.

The first study needs to investigate integrated frameworks which establish connections between digital marketing ecosystems and their measurable sustainability results that include environmental impact reduction community participation and economic resilience. Theoretical development will gain strength through empirical validation of the conceptual models which this review presents.

Research must expand to underrepresented areas which include South Asia and Africa and developing economies so researchers can study how digital tourism marketing and sustainability practices vary in different contexts.

The combination of marketing information systems and sustainability transition theories in interdisciplinary research methods will produce better understanding of how digital ecosystems change tourism governance and stakeholder cooperation (Chen et al. 2024). The study needs to investigate ethical issues which digital tourism communication raises through its need for transparency and authenticity and its danger of making false sustainability claims. The research needs to assess how emerging technologies which include AI-based personalization and virtual experiences and data analytics will help the sustainable tourism development process.

Conclusion

The researchers applied the PRISMA-ScR framework to perform a scoping review which examined how digital marketing affects sustainable tourism development through its communication systems. The research results established three main themes and two theoretical frameworks and three research methods which explain how tourism marketing relates to sustainability according to the analysis of selected peer-reviewed studies.

The research results indicate that tourism marketing has transformed into a digital system which combines multiple components that determine tourist perceptions and behaviours and intergroup interaction. Organizations make sustainability-focused changes through three main elements which include green marketing strategies and digital storytelling and social media activities and platform-based communication. The marketing practices enable businesses to achieve their environmental

objectives while creating social awareness and economic stability which supports their sustainable development objectives.

The thematic synthesis indicates that marketing methods have changed since their initial development to create integrated marketing systems which use sustainability stories for destination branding and tourism experience creation. Digital technologies create interactive engagement and co-creation and inclusive participation which enable marketing to function as the primary force that drives fundamental changes inside organizations.

The review demonstrates three research gaps which include insufficient geographic diversity and ethical communication issues and insufficient technological advancement for sustainability governance. The research needs interdisciplinary investigation and policy development which establishes links between digital advancements and sustainable tourism practices.

The study demonstrates how digital marketing ecosystems serve as growth drivers which promote sustainable tourism development and enhance understanding of tourism change. The research findings establish a basis which researchers and policymakers and tourism practitioners can use to develop communication strategies that help achieve sustainability goals while boosting destination performance in the digital age.

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Appendix



Figure 3

Source: Author Search Screenshot – the figure above shows ONOS Web Page with Applied Filters and Search Query